

THE PARISH OF MT. MORRIS ST. MARY'S :
AN EXAMINATION OF AN IRISH-CATHOLIC COMMUNITY 1860-1900

by

Michael R. Brown

Presented to the American Culture Faculty
at the University of Michigan-Flint
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Liberal Studies
in
American Culture

April 27, 1981

INTRODUCTION

As the second half of the 19th century began, the initial settlement and establishment of government in northern Genesee County was being completed. This slightly rolling, moderately timbered region had originally been considered part of Grand Blanc township from 1833 to 1836. In the latter year the northern area of the county was made part of Flint Township. Genesee and Flushing townships were organized on March 6, 1838. These two townships bordered on one another until Mt. Morris Township, the final township to be established in northern Genesee County was created in February, 1855. Flushing and Genesee townships had divided responsibility for the government of the area which eventually became Mt. Morris township.¹

The neighboring townships of Mt. Morris and Genesee took their names from places in western New York State, where many of the area's settlers had lived prior to their migration west. The boundry line of these two townships passed through a small settlement known as Dover. Two years later, in 1857, this settlement was surveyed, and preliminary operations were begun to accomodate the construction of the Flint and Pere Marquette Railway, that would eventually pass through the area. This railway activity spurred the settlement growth to a point, that community members requested village status from the state legislature ten years later. The newly incorporated village decided upon the name of Mt. Morris to replace the previous name of Dover.²

Few things remain in the present city of Mt. Morris to remind visitors of the region's heritage. Many of the dated homes have been modernized with false-brick fronts and protruding awnings. A street in the city bears the name of Dover, but few residents know the reason why. In the Mt. Morris business district the telltale 19th century brick work has been covered by aluminum siding.

Only subtle hints exist to show that the past holds a degree of significance for some local residents. A few years ago, an outer wall on a local business was decorated with a collage of characters and events from America's past. About half a mile to the south is another wall painting, located on the auditorium wall at St. Mary's Catholic School, and it hints at some local history: There in striking green letters, standing several feet high, is the message that St. Mary's is the home of the "Shamrocks." The inscription and the green shamrock painted near it serve as a reminder of a day when this Mt. Morris Catholic parish had the Irish as its dominant group.

This paper is a study of these Irish-Catholics and their role in the development of this 19th century Michigan parish and community. The paper will consider the economic, social, and political variances between this group and other ethnic and religious factions which comprised the Mt. Morris and Genesee area. It will also focus on the establishment of the settlement patterns exhibited by the Irish-Catholics in the two township area.

In an attempt to isolate the Catholics in the community, I sought church records which would give a list of parishioners in the early years of St. Mary's. I found that these records do not exist. Through

the gracious help of Sister Thomas Mary of St. Mary's School and Miss Helen Burns, the secretary at the parish rectory, I received access to St. Mary's baptismal records from 1870 to 1900. These records included the names of children, parents, and godparents. By using the baptismal records, I was able to complete a list of known parishioners. This list, however, is limited to those members of the congregation who were involved in a baptism during the last three decades of the 19th century. To make this list more extensive, I traced those known Catholics in the 1850 and 1860 census records and added to my parish lists family members of those already identified by baptismal information. Thus, a number of people were added to the list of Catholics by this association, rather than actual known church participation. It should be understood that the statistics pertaining to Irish-Catholics in this study are conservative since the entire congregation was probably not identified.

Another problem faced in researching the community involved the census data. I was dependent upon the census for the bulk of my material. Because of the brevity of the census material, and in some cases the complete omission of information, conclusions were, at times, based on limited data.

Despite these limitations, the material was more than sufficient to gain insight into the relationships of the Irish-Catholic in the development of a community, both religious and civil. Although this is a study of a limited number of people in a limited geographic region, my intention is to gain a deeper understanding of Irish-Catholics in America's past. Historian Ray Allen Billington suggested in a recent article, "...local history is not really local history at all; instead

it views the universality of the human experience through the tiny lens
of a single community."³

Roman Catholic settlers of Genesee County in the 1830's had their spiritual needs tended by priests who worked the missionary circuit from Detroit to Sault Ste. Marie. These Catholics would wait for the periodic visits of Father Martin Kendigan, Father Cullen, or Father Lawrence Kilroy.⁴ As the Catholic population in the area increased, plans were put into motion for the county's first Roman Catholic Church. In 1846 St. Michael's of Flint was constructed to serve the needs of the growing Catholic community.⁵

Through the 1850's and 1860's Catholic residents several miles north of Flint increased in number. Plans to establish a missionary parish in the area of Mt. Morris were started. A parish in this village would mean that area Catholics could avoid the arduous task of traveling to attend services in Flint. In 1865 a number of families petitioned Bishop Peter Paul LeFevre, of the diocese of Detroit, to construct a church to serve the growing needs of the people of the Mt. Morris area. Five men journeyed to Detroit to discuss the matter with the bishop firsthand.⁶

When permission for the new church was granted by the bishop, Christopher Hughes donated six acres of land for the project. Hughes' donation was located along the plank road running south from Mt. Morris toward Flint. Hughes designated that three acres of land were to be used for the church and parsonage, and three acres were to be set aside as a burial ground.⁷ A June, 1868, letter from a citizen of Mt. Morris to the editors of a Flint newspaper, The Wolverine Citizen, described the

church then under construction as, "a beautiful one, standing as it does upon high ground, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country."⁸ The final cost of the white, wood frame church was \$2,700.⁹ Contributors to the construction fund were listed as follows: Andrew Costello, Christopher Daly, James Gahan, Michael Hughes, Edward Hughes, Nicholas Cashin, Robert Furgeson, Frank O'Hare, John R. Benson, William Adderly, Lawrence O'Brien, and Michael Sheridan.¹⁰ The dedication of the completed structure took place on Sunday, September 20, 1868. A report in the (Flint) Wolverine Citizen offered the following account of the ceremony:

The dedication of the new Catholic Church in this village, under the invocation of Mary of the Seven Dolores, on Sunday the 20th, was indeed a very impressive and will long be remember by the community of Mount Morris. The Rev. Mr. DeCeuninck, of your city, performed the ceremony with the grace and composure peculiar to himself, which never fails to inspire those religious feelings with edification is sure to communicate. At 10½ o'clock A.M. the ceremony of dedication with the usual services of the Catholic Church were performed, after which the Reverend gentleman ascended to the altar, and delivered a forcible appeal to the understanding and the heart. He chose for his text that part of Solomon where it is said: "And the lord appeared to him that night, and said. I have heard thy prayers." The Rev. speaker then said: "In listening to the words I have just spoken, you cannot fail to recognize how striking the resemblance in many ways between the scene depicted in the Holy Writ, and the sense of which we are here today the privileged witnesses." ...He concluded by congratulating the congregation of Mount Morris upon the completion of the holy work which they had been engaged in for the past year, praying that it may be to them and their children the very Kingdom of Heaven...

Father DeCeuninck oversaw the care of the parish for the next two years. In 1869 the congregation again petitioned Bishop LeFevre. This time they sought the appointment of a priest to permanent residence in the parish. Bishop LeFevre's death delayed action. After the people

of St. Mary's petitioned again, in 1870, Bishop Casper H. Borgess named Reverend Father Canters as the first pastor. In the year prior to this appointment, Father Canters had been an assistant to Reverend J. H. Schuties in Bay City.¹² The new priest was said to be "young and energetic".¹³ These qualifications seems essential since his new duties were quite extensive. His assignment included the parish of St. Mary's, serving the church at County Line (Birch Run) named Sacred Heart, as well as missionary activities as far north as Caro.

In September of 1870, Father Canters arrived in the Mt. Morris area to seek contributions for the building of a parsonage on parish grounds to the south of the church. During his solicitation in the area, he secured pledges for \$1,300 from local parishioners. Construction began immediately by men named Look and Roods. The final cost of the project, including furniture, came to about \$1,600.¹⁴

The first baptism by a resident priest at St. Mary's took place on October 16, 1870. Elizabeth Ann McNamera, the daughter of John and Anna (Abbot) McNamera, became the first of many who would add to the size of the congregation in Mt. Morris. The number of baptisms fluctuated from 14 in 1898 to 37 in 1879. There were 653 baptisms recorded at St. Mary's from 1870 to 1900. The early totals of baptisms for the last three decades of the 19th century are as follows:¹⁵

1870 - 12	1880 - 26	1890 - 28
1871 - 17	1881 - 25	1891 - 21
1872 - 18	1882 - 22	1892 - 17
1873 - 30	1883 - *	1893 - 25
1874 - 30	1884 - 10*	1894 - 20
1875 - 26	1885 - 20	1895 - 21
1876 - 22	1886 - 26	1896 - 22
1877 - 22	1887 - 16	1897 - 30
1878 - 30	1888 - 29	1898 - 14
1879 - 37	1889 - 15	1899 - 22

* indicates that records were not available or may be incomplete

A number of men would be appointed pastor of this growing congregation over the period 1870 to 1900. Following Father Canters who left the parish in 1872, was Father G. R. Girard who remained pastor for the next six years. In 1878 Father Emil M. Dekiere, age 37 and a native of Belgium, was assigned responsibility for the people of St. Mary's. Father Dekiere was a linguist, reported to be fluent in 22 languages. The Reverend Dekiere claimed that he only needed the use of one language while he was at work in the parish of Mount Morris. "That", he said, "was Irish".¹⁶

Father Daniel P. Coyle arrived in 1884. The new pastor took a hard line on drinking and made an occasional visit to the local taverns to rouse the less-temperant members of his flock. His clerical hat forewarned many of his approach, and those who failed to notice it would soon be sent scurrying for the back door, along with the rest of the Catholic patrons, when his walking cane came to rest sternly on the saloon doors.¹⁷ Father Coyle was succeeded by Father Louis J. Van Straelen in 1887. The new priest remained the leader of the congregation for the next 11 years. Father T. J. Slattery became the final pastor of the 19th century. He arrived in May of 1898 and departed in July, 1900. Father Thomas Luby, a man instrumental in many changes within the parish, then took control. His efforts included the renovation of the rectory, the rebuilding of the County Line mission church, and the construction of the present St. Mary's Church.¹⁸

Although it is believed that thirty families made up the original parish of St. Mary's, local histories, parish histories, and personal accounts provide only a partial list of the first parishioners. Among them, begining in 1865, are the following (the ages and number of children listed).¹⁹

By 1870 the known population of the parish had increased by over 50 percent to 272 people. This figure includes 32 new births within the families already listed and the arrival of the following families:²²

1. Edwin Lamb-age 27. Wife Ellen-age 21. One child.
2. William Doran-age 27. Wife Elizabeth Crevey-age 27. Four children.
3. John Toll-age 33. Wife Mary-age 30. Nine children.
4. Martin Ryan-age 40. Wife Mary-age 30. Six children.
5. Peter J. O'Hare-age 26. Wife Mary. One child.
6. Ann Murphy-age 65. Six children.
7. George Monroe-age 31. Wife Margaret Down. Six children.
8. Thomas Dolan-age 39. Wife Bridgette Fay-age 32. Two children.
9. Patrick Dolan-age 33. Wife Mary-age 31. One child.
10. John Behan-age 54. Wife Ellen-age 50. Four children.

Of the 92 new parishioners 88 were of Irish descent, meaning that 95 percent of the early members of St. Mary's Church could show Irish ancestry. The rapid growth of St. Mary's Parish was made possible, to a large degree, by the growth and prosperity of the Irish-Catholic community in the area of Mt. Morris Township. Irish-Catholics formed a community within a community, a pattern made clear by examining the inter-relationships of the people and their settlement pattern in the area.

A close association developed among the Irish-Catholics, as exhibited by the marriage patterns in the community. However, it was hardly unusual for a relatively isolated farm community to experience a significant amount of intermarriage among its residents. Since people examined in this study are Catholic, it would seem logical to assume that they would stay within the wishes of the Roman Catholic Church and seek a Catholic mate. The results are predictable. Ethnic and religious similarities seemed to serve as the basis in the joining of two Irish Catholics in marriage. There were 21 confirmed marriages

between Irish-Catholics from the community of Genesee and Mt. Morris townships.²³ Census records can be used to show the percentage of marriages between Irish-Catholics in the community. Of the families where the ethnic backgrounds of the man and woman could be determined it was found that:

- 62 (86%) of the families had both spouses listed as Irish
- 4 (5.6%) of the families had one spouse listed as Irish
- 6 (8.3%) of the families had both spouses listed as non-Irish

It should be noted that many of these unions took place before the arrival of the couple to the Genesee--Mt. Morris area. More data is needed to determine whether this percentage rate is significant enough to suggest that ethnicity was an overriding factor in 19th century, township marriages. Certainly, religion played a part. Since the majority of the Catholics of marrying age in the township were Irish, it became difficult to isolate ethnicity and religion in evaluating marriage arrangements.

The early land purchases in Mt. Morris and Genesee townships do not indicate the presence of a distinct Irish community. The records point, however, to the fact that a large number of land speculators and early settlers in the area were from the state of New York. The largest number of these New Yorkers seem to have come from Livingston County. Other New York counties listed were Scholharie, Orleans, Genesee, Monroe, Columbia, Saratoga, Tompkins, Oneida, Erie, Onondaga, Schenectady, Dutchess, Orange, Jefferson, Wayne, Ontario, and Niagara.²⁴ According to a report by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society in 1892, "Nine-tenths of the early settlers of Genesee County were native Americans, largely from western New York".²⁵ New York would also supply the eventual church founders.

One of the reasons for the population shift can be explained in terms other than the call of the individual to the opportunity of the frontier. New York land, which had been disputed in land claims by that state and Massachusetts, had been sold by land companies on "very easy terms". Politicians in New York, in a feud with land speculators, issued a tax on unpaid balances of land contracts. This new tax prevented the land companies from offering land bargains as they had in the past. With the completion of the Erie Canal and the passage of a congressional land act, which made it possible for New Yorkers to purchase up to 160 acres of government land for \$1.25 an acre, the open lands of Michigan became desirable.²⁶ The Irish flow to Michigan was natural. As one writer put it, "The Irish seemed to have followed the direction their shovels pointed with the westward tide, first on the Erie Canal and later on the railroads".²⁷

An account of one of the first St. Mary's founders to settle in the county gives insight into the migration of the Irish-Catholic to the area. Christopher Hughes, the benefactor of the church property, left County Kildair and came to America by way of Liverpool in 1832. He and his family made the five week voyage across the Atlantic on the Carrol of Carrolton, commanded by Captain Ingersol. The Hughes family landed in New York. After establishing residence for his family in Rochester, Hughes set out for Michigan. He arrived in Flint for the first time on August 30, 1836. After purchasing three 80 acre parcels from Henry Henderson, Hughes returned to Rochester for his family. They made a portion of the final trip to Michigan onboard the steamer the United States. Hughes and his family established their first residence in Vienna Township²⁸

Although Christopher Hughes was listed in the census as a farmer he was involved in other pursuits, which helped him to establish a sizable estate. Shortly after his arrival in Vienna Township, he contracted with another settler to clear the man's 40 acre parcel. In payment, Hughes received 20 acres, one-half of the tract.²⁹ During the 1860's he again worked at clearing timber. This time he managed a crew of men preparing the area for the construction of the Pere Marquette Railroad. Because the Pere Marquette was a Michigan land-grant railroad, thousands of acres of land were opened up for sale. In 1863 a grant of 153,600 acres of land was offered to the public by the railroad.³⁰ In 1864 Christopher Hughes, in partnership with a man named Potter, purchased 2,550 acres of land between Clio and Bridgeport and went \$20,000 in debt. The timber lands sold for \$1.25 to \$2.50 per thousand of stumpage, but the farm land at \$11.53 an acre.³¹ Hughes worked for the next eight years cutting timber from the land and making ties for use by the railroad. His work crews numbered from 25 to 40 men. His profits from the enterprise enabled him to buy out Potter's share at a cost of \$14,000. He eventually sold the land to 40 different individuals.³² Christopher Hughes had a full life. He was proud that he had never been involved in a lawsuit, always paid his debts in full, and was willing to help out those in need.³³ He lived to see a number of his children prosper in the area.

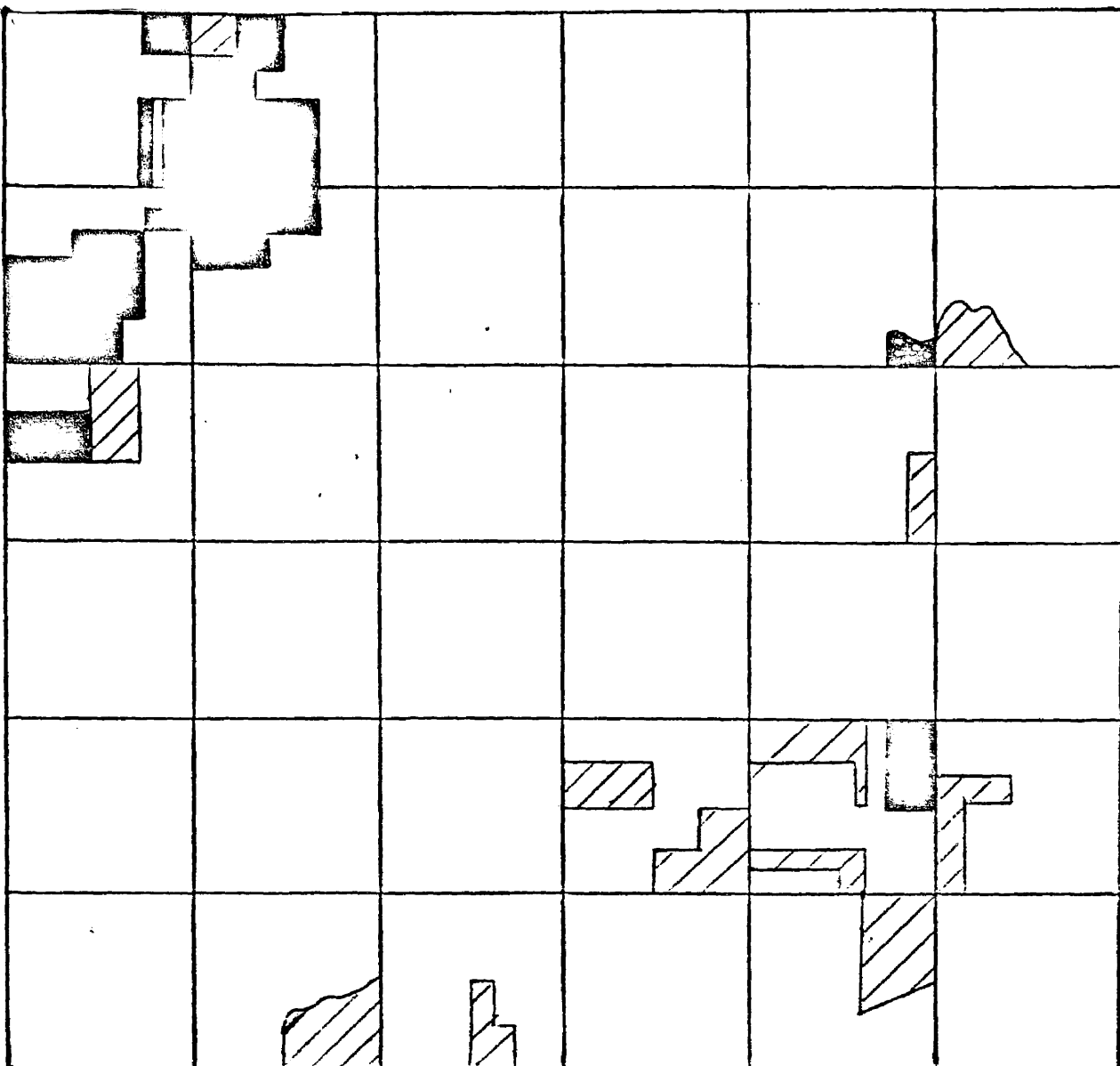
One of his sons, Michael, was born as the family was in the process of moving from Ireland to Michigan.³⁴ Michael, like 48 other members of the Catholic community, was born in New York. The majority, 37, of these births took place between 1840 and 1865.³⁵ In most cases, these children were born to parents who were native to Ireland. The significant number

of births in New York to Irish born parents shows that the pattern of settlement from New York to Michigan, started by Christopher Hughes and his family, was followed by many other families of similar backgrounds. Many of the Irish-Catholic families in the area by 1870 had common immigration and settlement experiences. It should be noted that only the families who had children born in New York could be positively traced to this New York to Michigan route.

By comparing the known Irish and Irish-Catholic population of Mt. Morris and Genesee townships to property ownership records available on 1873, 1889, and 1899 county plat maps³⁶ and county directories for the years 1882, 1885, and 1897;³⁷ it is possible to graphically prove the development of these groups in the area. The three maps of Genesee Township on the following page show a limited growth in the Irish and the Irish-Catholic community. The sections of land which do show the most pronounced change are located in the southeast sections, away from the church. Most of these settlements in 1889 and 1899 were made by Irishmen, whose religious affiliations could not be determined. The Irish-Catholic population of the township had established residence in the northwest corner of the region.

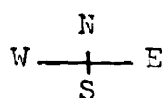
The townships of Mt. Morris and Genesee show land claims to have taken place in the majority of sections in the mid-1830's.³⁸ Both townships show a number of changes in property ownership from one plat map to another. There is, however, a major variation in the settlement of the two neighboring townships. This can be best understood by comparing the Genesee Township maps with the Mt. Morris maps. While Genesee Township shows a marked absence of Irish-Catholic growth, the Mt. Morris settlement presents a picture of expansion in Irish-Catholic property ownership.

ST.
MARY'S
CHURCH



1 inch = 1 mile

each 1 inch square = 640 acres



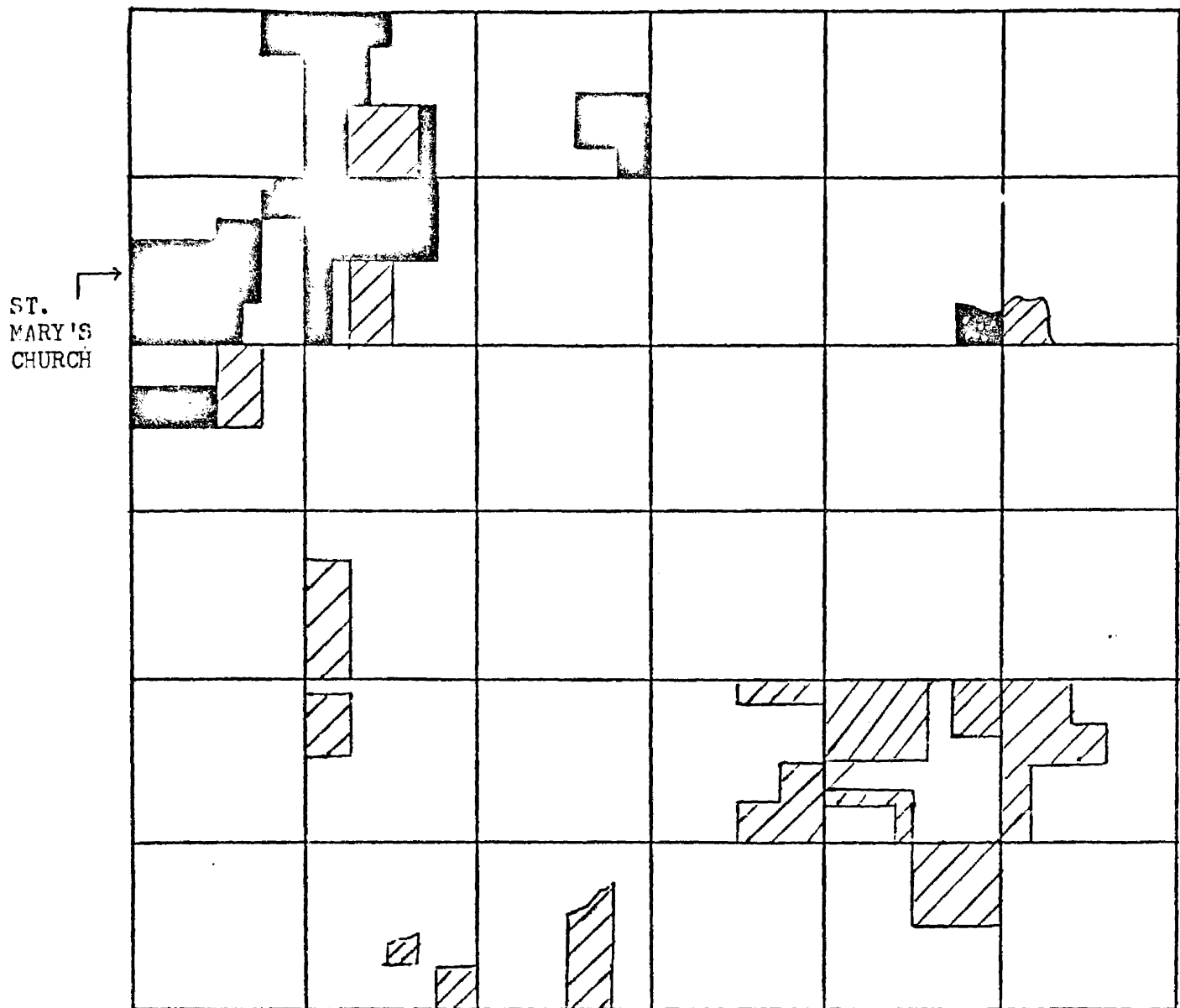
indicates Irish-Catholic settlement
11 households on 1013 acres



indicates Irish settlement
15 households on 1076 acres

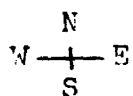


indicates Catholic but non-Irish
1 household on 40 acres



1 inch = 1 mile

each 1 inch square = 640 acres



indicates Irish-Catholic settlement
10 households on 921 acres

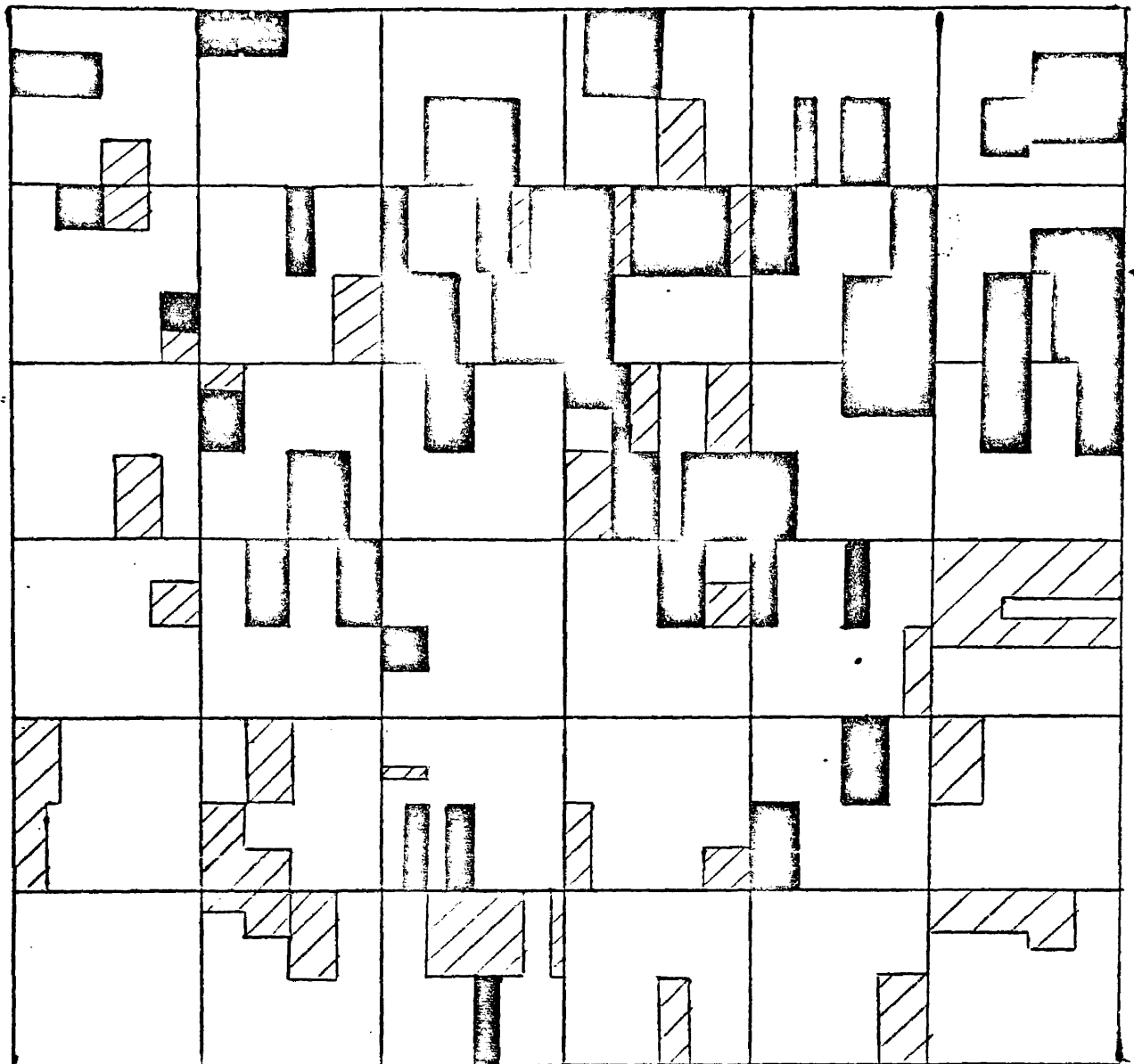


indicates Irish settlement
22 households on 1454 acres

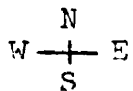


Indicates Catholic but non-Irish
1 household on 40 acres

MOUNT MORRIS TOWNSHIP - 1873



1 inch = 1 mile
each 1 inch square = 640 acres



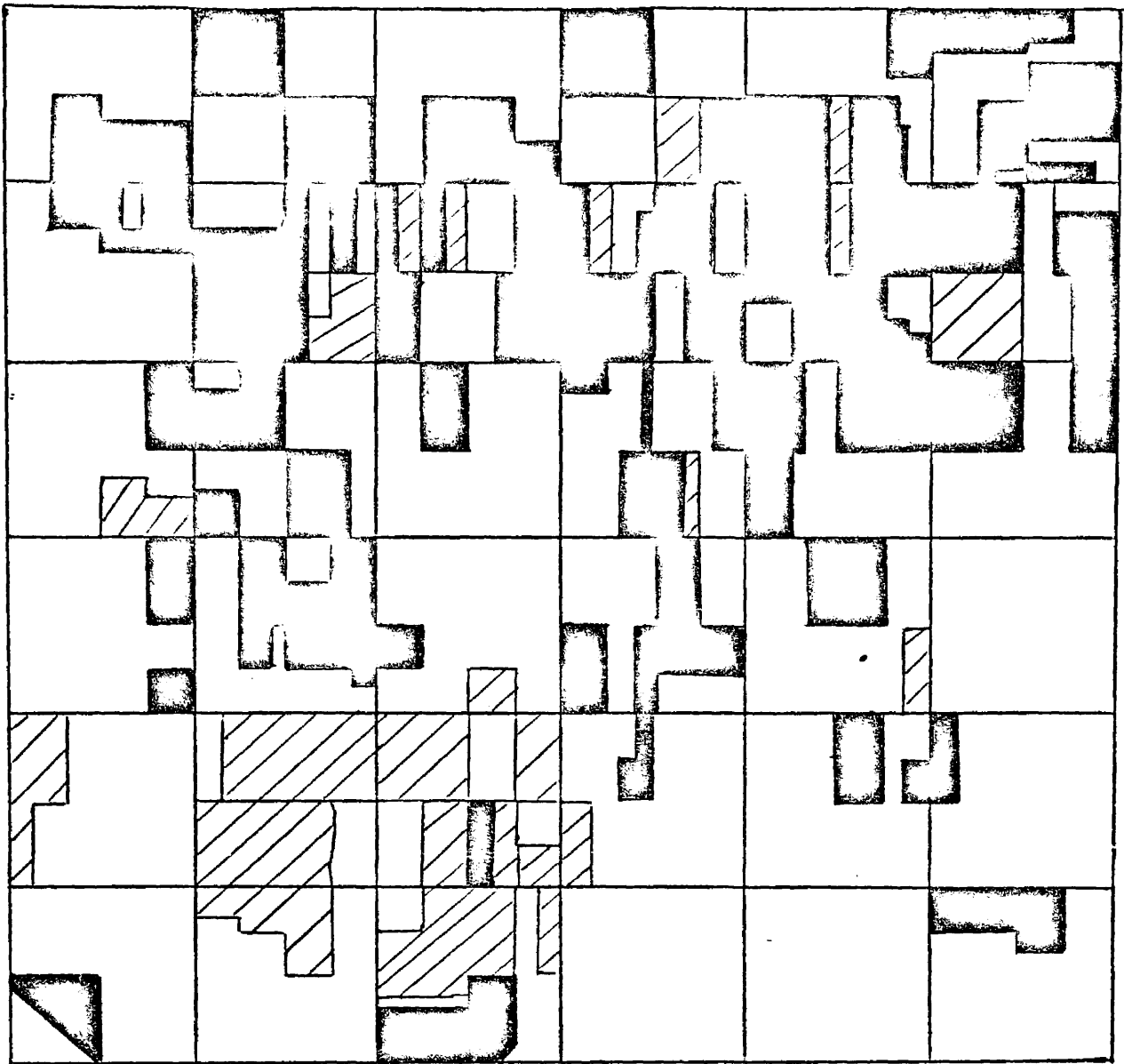
indicates Irish-Catholic
settlement
55 households on 3629 acres



indicates Irish settlement
35 households on 1942 acres

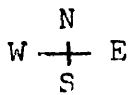


indicates Catholic but
non-Irish
1 household on 80 acres

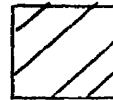


1 inch = 1 mile

each 1 inch square = 640 acres



indicates Irish-Catholic
settlement
73 households on 6397 acres

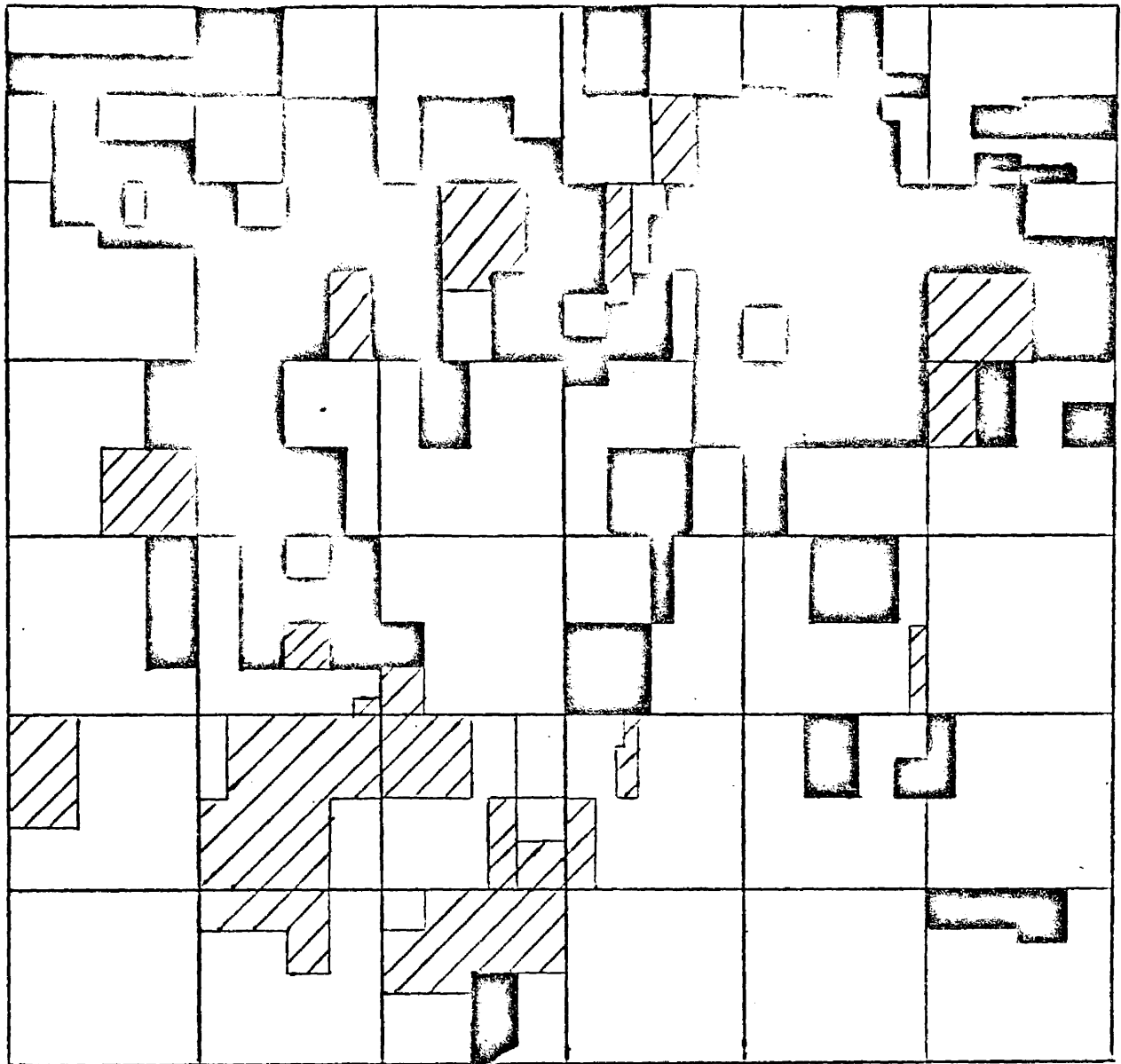


indicate Irish
settlement
28 households on 2281 acres



indicates Catholic but
non-Irish
1 household on 172 acres

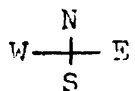
MOUNT MORRIS TOWNSHIP - 1899



ST.
MARY'S
CHURCH

1 inch = 1 mile

each 1 inch square =
640 acres



indicates Irish-Catholic settlement
87 households on 6266 acres



indicates Irish settlement
28 households on 1463 acres



indicates Catholic but non-Irish
2 households on 328 acres

When the ownership of a parcel of land changed hands in Mt. Morris Township, the new owner was often Irish-Catholic. Land transactions in Genesee Township were more resistant to this group.

The following charts contain information derived from research using the plat maps. The first chart deals with heads of household in Genesee and Mt. Morris townships. The second chart deals with the percentage of land occupied by Irish-Catholics in these townships.

	<u>1873</u>	<u>1889</u>	<u>1899</u>
Heads of household in Genesee Township who were Irish-Catholic	15	11	10
Heads of household in Mt. Morris Township who were Irish-Catholic	55	73	87
Heads of household in Genesee Township who were Irish but non-Catholic	4	15	22
Heads of household in Mt. Morris Township who were Irish but non-Catholic	35	28	28
Heads of household in Genesee Township who were Catholic but non-Irish	0	1	1
Heads of household in Mt. Morris Township who were Catholic but non-Irish	1	1	2

	<u>1873</u>	<u>1889</u>	<u>1899</u>
Percent of Mt. Morris Township land owned by Irish-Catholics	16	28	27
Percent of Genesee Township land owned by Irish-Catholics	4	5	4

The differences in Irish-Catholic settlement in the two areas can be explained in different ways. First of all, Mount Morris Township had a larger population of Irish-Catholic residents from the outset. Allowing for a more natural expansion in the township as second and third generation

residents established farms in close proximity to the land holdings of their parents. Second, Irish-Catholic prosperity was stimulated in Mt. Morris Township by increased economic opportunities. This was manifested in increased land-holdings by Irish-Catholics. Third, new arrivals of Irish-Catholics, which came in the second wave to Genesee County in the Civil War Era, may have found that Mt. Morris Township provided the least resistance to their settlement. It has been suggested that internal and external forces have been responsible for the geographically defined settlements of Irish-Catholic individuals.³⁹ The new arrivals could find social acceptance more readily in an area which then shared religious, political, and ethnic affiliation. There would also be immediate opportunity for economic survival. This fact is brought out by the census, which shows that a number of Irish-Catholic households had unrelated Irish-Catholics working as farm laborers or domestic servants. These laborers and servants, on the lower end of the economic scale, thus found opportunity within the Irish-Catholic community.

The natural growth of Irish-Catholic land-holdings in Mt. Morris Township can be documented by area plat maps. Holdings of individuals and families are shown to have increased in the period 1873 to 1899.⁴⁰ There is also evidence that a magnet-like attraction, which drew newly arriving Irish-Catholics to settle in close proximity with previously settled Irish-Catholics, may have been at work in the community. The number of new Irish-Catholic families that appear on the 1889 and 1899 plat maps indicate that a movement of a number of these families to the area took place after 1873. The arrival and assimilation of these individuals into Mt. Morris Township appears to be a common occurrence, while Genesee Township shows no parallel in Irish-Catholic settlement.

The settlement maps of Mt. Morris Township show another interesting trend that continued from plat map to plat map through the three decades. This trend is an increase of Irish-Catholics in the upper two-thirds of the township. The area to the west of St. Mary's Church, for example, shows Irish-Catholic owned property almost doubling over the 26 year period. On the other hand, the lower one-third of the township can be compared to Genesee Township in that there is no significant increase in the land-holdings of the Irish-Catholics. This concentration of similar people into a confined geographic area, again, points to the strong attraction of Irish-Catholics to one another. Residents of this area apparently did not go unnoticed by others. Several young men from the region west of Mt. Morris called themselves the "Western Reds". On Saturday-night visits to the saloons of Mt. Morris, they would proceed to become intoxicated and fight all takers until the constable escorted them to jail for the remainder of the evening.⁴¹

The census data adds support to the idea that Irish-Catholic settlers were drawn to established Irish-Catholic areas. For the purpose of this study, I have been able to isolate 54 heads of families from Genesee Township and 75 similar individuals from Mt. Morris Township. When the men from Genesee Township were examined by using census data, it was found that all but six were either residents of the village or Mt. Morris or residents of the township prior to the 1870 census. Of these six who became residents of the rural township after 1870, three were found to be of nationalities other than Irish and one was a hired laborer. However, the Mt. Morris records show that there were 18 new arrivals to that township after the 1870 census was recorded. These new arrivals all

became landowners outside the city of Mt. Morris, and all but one of these men could claim Irish ancestry.⁴²

A population profile of Mt. Morris Village, Genesee Township, and Mt. Morris Township are available by using census information from the years 1870, 1880, and 1900. The following list contains both a total number of individuals who were residents of Mt. Morris Village, and the number of Irish-Catholics contained in that total.⁴³

	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1900</u>
Total number of heads of household in Mt. Morris Village	54	53	107
Catholic heads of household in Mt. Morris Village	8	11	22
Total number of heads of household in Genesee Township	296*	327*	365
Catholic heads of household in Genesee Township	11	19	21
Total number of heads of household in Mt. Morris Township	264	288	315*
Catholic heads of household in Mt. Morris Township	25	56	61

*City of Mt. Morris census totals have been removed from the township census figures.

These figures, as well as settlement maps of the township, help to illustrate one final point that Irish-Catholics were a minority in Genesee and Mt. Morris township. The Irish-Catholics can be seen as a strong minority group in both Mt. Morris Township and Mt. Morris Village, but they are not nearly as distinguishable in Genesee Township. While no concrete examples of ethnic or religious mistreatment of this minority by the other residents of the townships can be found, it would seem natural that Irish-Catholics would hold together in social and political groups.

The Mt. Morris area records indicate that two secret benevolent associations, Union Lodge, No. 213, I.O.O.F. and Mt. Morris Lodge, No. 1383, Knights of Honor, existed in the village.⁴⁴ Missing from the rolls of members are the Irish-Catholics. While this may be attributed to the Roman Catholic Church's disdain for secret organizations or for a variety of other reasons, the Irish-Catholics were limited in their social and political affiliations. This sense of being a minority may have contributed to the settlement patterns already discussed. It may also have led to the formation of a political identity within the group. Biographies of local residents show that some of the Irish-Catholics belonged to such groups as the Knights of Columbus, the Knights of the Maccabees, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.⁴⁵ These organizations, with religious and ethnic ties, tended to assist in a political separation of the Irish-Catholic from others in the community.

The political history of Mt. Morris Township is rather unique when compared to the rest of the townships in Genesee County. In the late 19th century, the county showed strong Republican alignment. During the same period Mt. Morris Township showed a marked preference for the Democratic party. In the presidential election of 1880, for example, Mt. Morris was one of three townships in the area to carry a majority for Winifield Hancock, the Democratic candidate. The majority of voters in the other townships cast their ballots for Republican James Garfield, the overwhelming winner. During the same election, Mt. Morris Township was one of two townships to vote for the Democratic candidates in the 1880 election in 11 of the 14 races for national and state offices.⁴⁶

In the April, 1881 elections Mt. Morris Township's results were listed after the following introduction. "Another Democratic stronghold of the county this year elects two thirds of the Republican township ticket."⁴⁷ In April of 1882, the notice read, "Republicans gain a glorious victory by electing their entire ticket in Mt. Morris."⁴⁸ This would be the last election in the 19th century that the Republican party would control a majority of the offices in Mt. Morris Township.

While neighboring Genesee Township went Republican, as did most of the county during each election, Mt. Morris Township residents held consistently to the Democratic party after 1882. In later years, post-election reports would echo the fact that Mt. Morris Township was controlled once again by those on the Democratic ticket.

The one major difference between the townships of Mt. Morris and Genesee, which could help to explain why Mt. Morris Township became an oasis of Democratic power, while Genesee Township followed the Republican lead by the rest of the local townships, is the presence of the strong Catholic minority in Mt. Morris Township. The founders of St. Mary's Church did not limit their activities to spiritual concerns. They were, in a number of cases, active in local politics. Of the 17 men who were known to be part of the original founders of St. Mary's, a total of ten held political offices.⁴⁹

In Genesee Township the political records show an absence of Irish-Catholics in public office.⁵⁰ This is due, undoubtedly, to the success of the Republican party in the township, as well as the small base of voters who were Irish-Catholic. Mt. Morris village records, in contrast, indicate that the Catholics played an important role in village politics

In each election, starting with the first village vote in 1868 and continuing through 1900, the Catholic community had at least one member among village office holders. With Mt. Morris Village it might be argued that religious and ethnic associations may have been less important than an individual's financial position in the community. The Catholics who were elected to village offices were, in most cases, influential businessmen. For example, William Adderly, the first president of the village, was a member of St. Mary's Church as well as the most important merchant in the area.⁵¹

Following is a list of the number of Mt. Morris Township officeholders. Next to each year, from 1860 to 1900, the number of officials elected in the township for the given year is listed. In parenthesis is the number of Catholic officeholders for the year.⁵²

1860- 9 (2)	1870-10 (4)	1880-12 (2)	1890-12 (6)
1861-11 (2)	1871-12 (3)	1881-12 (1)	1891-12 (5)
1862-10 (0)	1872-12 (3)	1882-12 (0)	1892-14 (9)
1863-10 (0)	1873-11 (2)	1883-14 (4)	1893-14 (7)
1864-10 (1)	1874- 9 (3)	1884-14 (3)	1894-14 (7)
1865-11 (0)	1875-11 (2)	1885-12 (3)	1895-14 (6)
1866-10 (0)	1876-12 (3)	1886-14 (2)	1896-13 (8)
1867- 9 (1)	1877-10 (6)	1887-12 (2)	1897-14 (8)
1868- 9 (1)	1878-12 (4)	1888-12 (2)	1898-14 (9)
1869-10 (1)	1879-11 (2)	1889-12 (4)	1899-14 (8)
			1900-11 (7)

The percentage of Catholic officeholders 1860-1869= 8%

The percentage of Catholic officeholders 1870-1879= 29%

The percentage of Catholic officeholders 1880-1889= 18%

The percentage of Catholic officeholders 1890-1900= 55%

These figures show the increase in the number of Catholics holding political office by the end of the 19th century. Since Irish Catholics arrived in the township somewhat later than other groups, it is not

surprising that they did not exhibit much political clout in the 1860's. By the 1870's, with increased numbers, they began to have more influence in the elections. The early 1880's showed a trend in township politics to turn to the Republican Party, helping to explain the poor showing of Irish-Catholics in 1881 and 1882 since Irish-Catholics have traditionally been followers of the Democratic Party. The officeholders in the last decade of the century were primarily second-generation residents. These American-born Irish-Catholics show a strong inclination to exercise their political power. By the 1890's Irish-Catholic voters of Mt. Morris Township had numerical strength. Their block of voters, along with a few other supporters from the community, made political control possible.

The assumption that the majority of Irish-Catholics were Democrats is supported in the limited amount of biographical information available on area residents. Biographical sketches can be found on seven Irish-Catholics from the Mt. Morris area.⁵³ Five of these—Nicholas Cashin, Herman Hughes, John Hughes, John Russell, and Nicholas Murphy—were known Democrats. Frank Dolan was listed as a Republican. John R. Benson was a Republican, but in the 1890's became a member of the People's Party and gained support of the Democrats to help him win a seat in the state legislature.⁵⁴

By examining these biographies further, a better view of resident's economic activities can be compiled than is first evident through census records. Christopher Hughes, for example, was listed as a farmer in the census. The bulk of his fortune, as mentioned earlier, was accumulated due to land speculation, timber, and railroad construction. His son, John Hughes, was also associated with farming in the census. John's biography

shows that mercantile pursuits, carpentry, and foundry business consumed a greater portion of his time than farming activities.⁵⁵

Nicholas Cashin and John R. Benson have similar discrepancies exposed in their biographies. They were listed as farmers in the census, and they were, in fact, farmers during a portion of their lives. They both, however, had economic interests away from the farm. Mr. Benson taught school for a period of time and was a politician even though farming was his chief economic pursuit.⁵⁶ Cashin, too, had extensive farming interests. It was written in his biography that, "The agricultural element that has been so largely instrumental in the upbuilding of Genesee County, has no better representative than this gentleman". A later entry in the same biography pointed to the more complex business dealings of Mr. Cashin. It stated that, "He owned and managed a grocery store for about five years, and was engaged in the wholesale liquor business in Flint, where he now owns a lot. He is besides the owner of three stores and three acres of land in Mt. Morris Village. For more than thirty years his principle business was buying staves and square timber, shipping and selling in Europe, but he deemed it prudent to quit that business on account of the scarcity of oak timber. In 1887 he removed from the village of Mt. Morris to his present farm, which he had owned for over thirty years and cultivated by hired help. He has bought and sold land in Genesee County, mostly for the timber, but is now chiefly in general farming and stock raising".⁵⁸

Farming and being a farm laborer proved to be the chief occupations of the Irish-Catholics. This was documented by the census and the county directories. Of the Irish-Catholics who could be isolated in the community, 36 were listed as farmers and 13 were farm laborers. This did not come

as a surprise since the primary occupation of others in Genesee, Mt. Morris, and surrounding townships was also farming. The data also showed the following occupations being held by those in the Irish-Catholic in Mt. Morris Village.⁵⁹

- Three liquor store operators
- Two saloon keepers
- Three railroad workers
- Three dry goods merchants
- Two lumbermen
- One harness maker
- One hotel operator
- One lumber buyer
- One school teacher
- One gardener
- One printer
- One dressmaker
- One carpenter

A letter to the Wolverine Citizen by a Mt. Morris resident offered a description of some economic activities in the early days of the Mt. Morris Village. The following letter appeared October 30, 1867 issue:⁶⁰

Thinking perhaps you are not aware of the village in Genesee County as Mt. Morris (judging from the amount of local contribution), I will with your sanction tender a few times.

Firstly, we are conceited enough to consider our little village on of business and one that compares favorable with those around us; and as an example of our business, we also give you a few facts relating to our lumbering interests as given us by Mr. Whitney, station agent, at this point. Since the first of October, he has shipped one hundred and eighty-three full car loads of freight of which probably one hundred and fifty car loads have been lumber. Allowing each car to contain eight thousand feet, there have been shipped one million two hundred thousand feet of lumber. Yet the quantity at the station seems as large as at the begining of the month...

...W J. Adderley is also a very noticable man in our midst (speaking in a business point of view) for there can always be seen from morning to night that rush of people to his well filled store, where can always find goods, polite clerks, and the broad grin of W. J. Adderley himself.

William J. Adderley was listed as having an accumulated wealth of \$12,000 in 1870. This made him the second richest man in Genesee Township

when the census was taken in that year. The man who ranked first was, Stephen R. Hughes. His wealth was set at \$20,720, and his occupation was listed as farming. Hughes, like Adderley, was Catholic. The Irish-Catholics in the area did not appear to suffer from economic restraints. They prospered as merchants in the village and as farmers in the rural area. To better understand the economic position of the Irish-Catholics in the community, I compared the real and personal wealth of the individuals listed in Genesee and Mt. Morris townships in 1860 and 1870. These figures, it should be noted, are not totally accurate. Many individuals who are listed as property holders and have an assigned wealth value in the 1860 census have no money associated with their names in the census of 1870. This is due to an obvious omission by the recorder of the 1870 census. Enough information is present, however, to offer a comparison between Irish-Catholic residents and the other members of the community.

The Genesee Township census of 1860 showed a total of 238 residents having wealth. The census indicated this wealth in the form of real estate and/or personal property. I combined these two figures to come up with the total wealth for each individual in the township. I found that the median amount of money listed for the residents of Genesee Township was \$3,571. The average amount of wealth for Genesee Township was \$2,419.10. The Irish-Catholic members of Genesee Township have wealth which puts nine members above the median wealth figure and six below, with the average amount of money being \$2,686.51.

In the 1870 census of Genesee Township 112 people had accumulated the median wealth of \$1,000 and the average was \$1,683.63. The members of St. Mary's parish had six members below the median wealth and five members above. The average wealth of this group was \$5,632.35 (this inflated figure

is due to the large amounts of wealth attributed to William Adderley and Stephen Hughes and the limited number of Irish-Catholics).

In Mt. Morris Township there were 164 recorded heads of families with money indicated with them in the 1860 census. The median amount of money was \$1,000, significantly lower than the median amount of money for the people of Genesee Township during the 1860 census. This lower amount could have contributed to the rise in Irish-Catholic settlers coming to the township in the years that followed. With lower wealth figures, land may have been more readily available and not as fully developed for settlement as the land in Genesee Township, which was occupied at an earlier date. The future members of St. Mary's parish who resided in the township in 1860 had four members with wealth above the township median and four members below. The average amount of wealth for all residents was \$1,924.54, and for Catholics it was \$2,849.25.

In the 1870 census Mt. Morris Township showed median wealth of \$1,400 with 128 residents showing real or personal wealth. Again, the Irish-Catholic residents were split down the middle. Six families had wealth in excess of the median and seven had lower amounts. The average for the Irish-Catholic residents was \$3,692.30; the rest of the township averaged \$2,707.77.

In going to the census economic categories, I had expectations of finding a marked difference between the Irish-Catholic and other residents of the area. However, this was not to be confirmed by the data. Irish-Catholic residents of the township can be found in all segments of the economy, both above and below the median.

A more substantial record is available as to the economic relationship of the Irish-Catholic community to the other members of the townships. The Genesee County Directory for 1897 has economic information on a larger number of Irish-Catholics than the census. It includes those who have immigrated to the area after the 1870 census, as well as the second generation Irish settlers, along with many of the original members of the St. Mary's parish.

For Genesee Township in 1897, a total of 123 residents who had wealth assigned to them in the form of real estate or personal property were recorded. Of this number, 20 were found to be Irish-Catholic. This Irish-Catholic minority had ten members above and ten members below the \$2,200 median wealth for the township, consistent with results derived from the 1860 and 1870 census information on wealth.

In Mt. Morris Township Irish-Catholics, according to the County Directory, were more dominant and more prosperous than their counterparts in Genesee Township. Eighty-nine residents who were listed in the directory were not found to be members of the Catholic parish. The members of St. Mary's totaled 42. The median wealth for non-parishioners was \$2,600. This indicated that Mt. Morris Township had prospered during the period since the 1870 census was taken. Although Genesee Township's median wealth had been significantly higher, it dropped below the Mt. Morris Township level. The members of St. Mary's, who had wealth associated with their names, could claim 25 individuals above and 17 below the median wealth of township residents. The average amount of wealth of a St. Mary's parishioner was \$3,527.98. The other residents showed an average of \$3,100.

Unemployment statistics were compiled in the 1900 census. The list of unemployed persons for Mt. Morris Township for 1900, shows that the Irish had an unemployment rate lower than the rest of the general population of the township. Of 427 working members in the township, 130 were of Irish descent, i.e. either having been born in Ireland or having parents born in Ireland.⁶¹ Nine Irish were unemployed for a period of at least one Month during the year prior to the taking of the census. Four were from one family. By contrast 30 non-Irish individuals were unemployed for a portion of the same time period. The percentage of unemployed Catholics for 1900 stood at 6.9 percent of their total. For the non-Irish group this figure stood at 10.1 percent of the total group.

Another factor-the ability to read and write-may have been more important than either ethnicity or religious affiliation in determining the economic position of an individual in the two townships. The Irish as a group had a higher rate of illiteracy than the non-Irish in Genesee and Mt. Morris townships. It was the Irish who were illiterate who were at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. The information below shows the percentage of illiteracy among those of Irish birth in relation to others in the township in 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900.⁶²

1860	
<u>Group</u>	<u>Percentage of those illiterate</u>
Mt. Morris Township-Irish	43.5%
Mt. Morris Township-other	10.0%
Genesee Township-Irish	15.0%
Genesee Township-other	2.3%

1870

<u>Group</u>	<u>Percentage of those illiterate</u>
Mt. Morris Township-Irish	42.1%
Mt. Morris Township-other	5.3%
Genesee Township-Irish	39.1%
Genesee Township-other	3.7%

1880

<u>Group</u>	<u>Percentage of those illiterate</u>
Mt. Morris Township-Irish	32.8%
Mt. Morris Township-other	4.4%
Genesee Township-Irish	8.7%
Genesee Township-other	1.2%

1900

<u>Group</u>	<u>Percentage of those illiterate</u>
Mt. Morris Township-Irish	51.7%
Mt. Morris Township-other	3.5%
Genesee Township-Irish	20.0%
Genesee Township-other	.8%

Through researching the Irish-Catholics who were listed as illiterate, they were found to be below average in income. In Mt. Morris Township in 1900, seven of the 15 Irish listed as illiterate were Catholic. Of this group, only one had wealth in excess of the median for the township. Four of them ranked in the lower 10 percent in wealth for the area.

The census information for Mt. Morris Township for 1870 shows 24 Irish-born heads of households to be illiterate. The 1870 census omitted much of the wealth information. As a result, it is difficult to make much more than a general assumption concerning the effects of illiteracy

on the economic standing of individuals in the community. Although limited in size, results of the sample group are consistent indicating that illiteracy might have been more of a handicap to the economic advancement of the individual than either religion or ethnic background.

The people of Mt. Morris and Genesee townships sought money and economic advancement like all others in America. Even get-rich-quick schemes played upon their minds. One such opportunity hit the people in April of 1870. Abraham Topham, traveling along the plank road north of the village of Mt. Morris, found "Ile" (oil) bubbling in a ditch. Reports of that discovery brought near hysteria to the surrounding area as the prospects of instant fortune teased them. One report of the incident stated that the people seem to "have the 'comodity' on the brain 'muchly'".⁶³

Many occurrences disrupted the people's lives around Mt. Morris during the last one-third of the 19th century. More often than not it was an adversity of some sort. When proplems arose, the Irish-Catholics did not find themselves immune from them. Stories from the area often told of personal injury. Michael Hughes' son, for example, mangled a leg when he fell under a wagon that was being pulled by a team of oxen.⁶⁴ His sister broke her leg while ice skating.⁶⁵ Sometimes the stories were more ominous. Consider this report from Mt. Morris written in the winter of 1881: "Quite a large number of children are sick with a disease similar to the inflammation of the lungs. Nicholas Cashin has been so unfortunate as to lose his infant daughter, and Carlos Green a little boy with the disease."⁶⁶

The community was also the scene of an occasional crime. Christopher Hughes had a shed by his barn ransacked and all his farm implements stolen. In writing about the incident someone noted that, "Hanging in certainly too good for the perpetrator of such a miserable low life theft".⁶⁷

Through examining early records and newspaper accounts concerning the village of Mt. Morris, two things seemed to stand out as major concerns of residents. They are fire and alcohol. Ordinances in the village were passed to make sure chimneys did not become hazardous. Provisions were made to include cleaning and subsequent charge to those whose chimneys proved to be a fire threat to the community.⁶⁸ When fire did hit the village, many Irish-Catholics felt the effects. The first major fire, I believe to be intentionally started, took place in 1871. In 1880 a fire began that threatened the village, but it was controlled thanks to a community effort and a favorable wind. A building, owned by Edward Hughes and operated by John Hughes as a liquor store, was destroyed with a loss estimated at \$3,000.⁶⁹

The most damaging fire, however, took place on April 29, 1881. Three blocks of the city, the major portion of the business district, was wiped out, causing the following losses by parishioners of St. Mary's:

Hughes Liquor Store--\$1,200
 Doran's Liquor Store--\$900
 Green's Shoe Shop--\$800
 H. G. Mann (wife was a Catholic)--\$5,500

According to the account there was little doubt that the fire had been set, leading one member of the crowd to state, "What spite can anyone have against us to be continually burning us out!"⁷⁰

A Flint newspaper reported on a fire loss of an individual Irish-Catholic farmer in 1836. The event was not as spectacular as the tragic fire five years before. Of interest was the manner in which the gentleman, John R. Murphy, assessed his loss, reported as follows:⁷¹

Mt. Morris

At about half past six Tuesday evening of last week the barn of John R. Murphy, living southwest of the village, accidentally caught fire by a lantern being tipped over by a little girl, eight years old. The flames soon spread and the entire building was consumed in a few minutes...Having resided on his farm for twenty-three years, he is well known and universally liked, and his host of friends offer him sympathy and assistance; the later he declined by saying he is in a free country and not a tyrannical government, and with willing hands he hoped to soon get the front again, and it is the wish of his many friends that fortune may smile on him.

The regulation of liquor sales and laws concerning the operation of saloons in the village received much attention from the village council. Of five saloons in business in 1880⁷² four were owned and operated by Irish-Catholics. A fair amount of alcohol must have been consumed by residents to support this number of establishments with such a limited population. Early accounts, like the following, tell of brawls caused by drunken citizens.⁷³

During the past two weeks the unusual quiet of our village has been continually on the qui vire with the almost nightly amusement of pugilistic encounters that would compare favorably with the best days of plug-uglyism of Baltimore. On the evening of Thanksgiving some disciples of Crispin, hailing from a town east of the station, accompanied by a few friends, waxing strong under the effects of an over amount of "tangle foot" proceeded to knock into "smithereens" everything available in and around the Dover House, but were brought suddenly to grief by receiving a summary punishment that we hope will answer as a warning to the youths.

Some of the merchants discussed the prospect of refusing to deal in alcohol. Although the town never went dry, restrictions such as no Sunday liquor and closing of the saloon at 10 P.M. were attempts to control the problem.⁷⁴ One individual who supported the move by some businessmen to discontinue the sale of spirits called it, "a noble deed... This has removed from among us one of the strongest temptations to our old as well as young men, to stray from the paths of rectitude, and may save our little village from falling into that deep slough of degradation which had unfortunately befallen some of our neighboring towns".⁷⁵

Irishmen and whiskey--a long-held stereotype--has been the frequent subject of jokes. The following is a local story circulated by the Flint Daily News in 1886:⁷⁶

About seven o'clock last evening a farmer from Mt. Morris who is said his name was Gaskell engaged in a quarrel with an Irishman by the name of Pat Doyle near the C & G. T. Freight Depot. Both had been punishing whiskey during the afternoon and each thought that he was the best man of the two. Finally they came to blows i.e., one blow each and immediately thereafter Pat found he had an eye which stubbornly refused to work and the farmer looked about for an ear he supposed had been knocked off. No arrests were made.

Stories such as this may have been quite humorous, but they did not address the serious aspect of why the Irish community seemed to have such a propensity concerning alcohol. One local explanation is that alcohol helped the Irish to escape the realities of life around them.⁷⁷ Limited opportunities in the Mt. Morris area may have created a sense of frustration for those who felt trapped in a situation in which they could find no hope for the future. While this explanation of the cause of alcoholism can only be offered as a theory, local records of individual persistence can give more substantial insight into the stability of the community.

By tracing 34 families on page eight, through the census, their length of residence in the community can be estimated. In general, these 34 families remained in the townships for long periods. The census from 1850 and 1900 show that 16 families remained for more than 20 years, 16 families for more than ten years, and only two were found in one census period.

While these census statistics indicate a relatively stable Catholic community, the baptismal records from St. Mary's Church point to a different conclusion. A number of baptisms recorded in the Church log were performed for families who cannot be found in the census. Part of this discrepancy may be explained by the record keeping system used in the parish. Several of the years for which baptisms were recorded showed no distinction between baptisms at St. Mary's and those performed at missionary churches of the parish. These people, then, may have been residents of a different county since they did not appear as landowners in the townships of Genesee, Mt. Morris, Thetford, Vienna, or Flint.⁷⁸

The large number (66) of family heads who could not be located in the census indicated, I believe, that the region and the church may have served as a temporary stopover for a number of people. These individuals may have found the region of Mt. Morris to be a jumping off point to other areas. By the 1870's the railroad provided access to almost any region in the state. Other areas offered more opportunity to later settlers than the already congested townships of Genesee and Mt. Morris. Another reason to suspect that the Mt. Morris area was only a temporary place of residence for many families on their way to somewhere else, has to do with similarities in family names. Many of the individuals who

could not be located had the same name as known occupants of the townships. There is also evidence that the presence of family members in Mt. Morris was a cause of migration.⁷⁹ A brother or cousin may have been encouraged to move to a place where their family could help to provide for them until they could move on and establish a permanent residence of their own. This limited stay is reflected in the baptismal records and subsequent absence in the census records. Much more research time than this study allows would be needed to verify this theory.

The biographical sketches found in the county histories provide insight into what happened to the second generation. These sketches were written about prominent citizens of the community, therefore, this group cannot necessarily be considered a representative sample of Irish-Catholics. They do, however, help to illustrate what occurred to the second and third generation.

Upon reaching adulthood many children of prominent citizens left the community. For example, the adopted daughter of Mary and Thomas Russell, Susie, left the family farm in Mt. Morris for married life in Buffalo, New York. Of the four children of Francis and Bridgette O'Hare, three left the area, while their son Peter remained to carry on the family farm.⁸⁰

The children of Henry and Elizabeth Benson show a similar pattern of leaving the area. Two of their children died in infancy. Their fourth son, William, died as a prisoner of war in the Confederate prison at Belle Isle. Their daughter, Elizabeth, became a sister in the order of the Sacred Heart. Their youngest daughter married and moved to Bay County. Only the oldest son, John, lived almost all his life in Cenessee County.⁸¹

Most of the children of this remaining son, John R. Benson, established their homes outside of the area when they reached maturity. Mary settled in Pennsylvania. Edward Benson became a Naval engineer and settled in the West, William established a farm near Linden, Florence became employed near Detroit, John C. moved to Flint, and Robert left to continue his education in Chicago. Only one daughter, E. Louise, married and remained in Genesee Township.⁸²

Most of the children of Christopher Hughes, the contributor of St. Mary's property, pursued interests outside of the area. Although sons Michael and John lived out their final days in the area, Matthew, Thomas, Mary, and William moved. Matthew became involved in the lumbering business in Louisiana, Thomas eventually died in California, Mary moved with her husband to North Dakota and William became a farmer in Corunna.⁸³

An incident in the Hughes family history serves as an example of the ironies that could befall a separated family. John enlisted in Company C of the Twenty-third Michigan Infantry during the outbreak of the Civil War. He was involved in a number of encounters with Confederate forces. During one battle his company faced a Mississippi battery which included his brother Matthew.⁸⁴

John Hughes is also an example of an individual who left the Mt. Morris area, only to return years later. Hughes had departed for about 30 years before he decided to again take up residence here. Others, like John Bernard Russell, would also leave to try other ventures, only to return to area farming life.⁸⁵ Matthew Hughes would be returned to his father's farm under different circumstances. Matthew died near McCarley's Landing in Mississippi on December 17, 1868.⁸⁶ His father, Christopher, had his remains shipped home so that he could be laid to rest in the cemetery ground which the elder Hughes had donated just a few years before.

By the beginning of the 20th century, many others had followed Matthew and Christopher Hughes to their final resting place behind the church.

After over 30 years of use the original wood-frame church, that had served the old Irish-Catholic community, was too small for the growing group of parishioners. In 1903, the pastor of St. Mary's, Father Luby, began the initial work toward the construction of a new church. The cornerstone of the new building was laid on October 6, 1903, in a dedication ceremony. Over one thousand people gathered with 11 priests to witness Bishop Foley of Detroit conduct the dedication services. The completed church, which followed the English Gothic style of the Renaissance period, was completed at the cost of \$20,000.⁸⁷ It stands today as a "powerful visual identity" in the Mt. Morris area as it continues to serve the spiritual needs of its modern congregation.⁸⁸

Today, parishioners with family names such as Roesner, Harcz, Mankowski, Petroskey, Dekoski, and Sushynski walk down the carpeted isles and sit in modern pews. Occasionally one of them may look at the stained glass windows that line the walls and ceiling. If they do, they may see memorials etched in glass. Here the names Hughes, Daly, McKenna, Benson, Hogan, Delaney, Cashin, O'Hare, McGinnis, and Ryan remain as a reminder of an Irish-Catholic community of a century ago.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Franklin Ellis, History of Genesee County Michigan, (Philadelphia, 1879), 312.

² Edwin O. Wood, History of Genesee County Michigan, (Indianapolis, 1916), II, 722.

³ Ray Allen Billington, "The Uses of Local History", American Heritage Magazine, Dec. 1980, 85.

⁴ Wood, II, 746.

⁵ Ellis, 46.

⁶ Wood, II, 746. Sister Thomas Mary, Interview (January, 15, 1981).

⁷ This information was recorded in a 1962 parish fund-raising pamphlet.

⁸ Wolverine Citizen, 3 June 1968, 8.

⁹ Ellis, 320.

¹⁰ Ellis, 320.

¹¹ Wolverine Citizen, 26 September 1868, 8.

¹² Wood, II, 746-747. Wolverine Citizen, 24 September 1870.

¹³ Biographical History of Genesee County Michigan, (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen and Co., 1907), 333-334.

¹⁴ Wolverine Citizen, 24 September 1870, 8.

¹⁵ Mt. Morris St. Mary's Catholic Church baptismal records 1870-1900.

¹⁶ Interview with Sister Thomas Mary.

¹⁷ Interview with Sister Thomas Mary.

¹⁸ Bowen, pub., Biographical History, 333-334.

¹⁹ Ellis, 320.

²⁰ The census information for Genesee and Mt. Morris townships in 1860 and 1870 was reviewed to add to the list of church founders. The list contains names of those who were known to be members of the parish, since their names can be found in the parish baptismal records between 1870 and 1900. These families were known to have been in the area when the church was founded, since they have been recorded in both the 1860 and 1870 census. The list also contains other members of the Catholic community who can be found only in the 1870 census. They were included in the list because the census also indicates that they had children born

in Michigan prior to 1865 even though the family was not living in the area in 1860. While it cannot be conclusively established that these families took an active role in the formation of the parish, their potential for involvement in the creation of the parish cannot be conclusively dismissed.

21 Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Schedules of Inhabitants, Eighth (1860), Ninth (1870), Tenth (1880), and Twelfth (1900) Census of the United States, (microfilm copy, Federal Archives), Genesee County, Mt. Morris and Genesee townships. Hereafter cited as Census 1860, 1870, 1880, or 1900.

22 This group has children born outside of Michigan after 1865, but are listed in Mt. Morris or Genesee township's census records for 1870. This indicates arrival in the area between 1865 and 1870.

23 These can be found by consulting the St. Mary's baptismal records for 1870 through 1900. Their pre-marital presence in the community and ethnic origins can be confirmed in the census.

24 Wayne A. Selzer, Original Land Records Genesee County Michigan, (Flint, 1859-60).

25 Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Michigan Historical Collection, (1892), Volume 21, 383.

26 George P. Graff, ed. , The People of Michigan, (Michigan Department of Education State Library Services, 1974), 20.

27 Graff, 113.

28 Diary of Mrs. H. G. Mann. This woman was the granddaughter of Christopher Hughes. She interviewed Hughes and recorded the information about Hughes' life in her diary.

29 Wood, II, 469.

30 Forrest B. Meek, Michigan's Timber Battleground, (Clare Bicentennial Historical Committee, 1976), 132.

31 Frank N. Elliot, When the Railroad Was King, (Michigan Historical Commission, 1966), 26.

32 Mrs. Mann's diary.

33 Mrs. Mann's diary.

34 Census, 1870.

35 Census, 1870.

36 F. W. Beers, Atlas of Genesee County Michigan, (New York, 1873), 41, 37.
E. R. Cookingham, Atlas of Genesee County Michigan, (Caro, 1889), 83-84.
Homer A. Day, pub., Atlas of Genesee County Michigan, (Flint, 1899), 17-19.

37 Glen V. Mills, Genesee County Directory 1870-82. H. C. Osbornes, Flint City and Genesee Co. Directory 1881-82, (Flint, 1881).

38 Genesee County Original Land Records.

39 Richard J. Meister, The Catholic Minority on the Frontier: Anglo-American Catholics in Indiana 1820-1860. This paper was presented at the spring meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, April 8, 1972, at the University of Notre Dame.

40 The plat map shows an increase in acreage owned by Irish-Catholics in Mt. Morris Township to have increased from 3629 acres in 1873 to 6266 acres in 1899.

41 The Mt. Morris Centennial Program (1867-1967) prepared by the Mt. Morris Area Centennial Committee.

42 These people were born in Ireland or had a parent or grandparent of Irish birth.

43 The Mt. Morris village residents were isolated in the Genesee Township and Mt. Morris Township census by the list of professions.

44 Ellis, 319.

45 Wood, II, 485.

46 Wolverine Citizen, November 1880.

47 Wolverine Citizen, April 1882.

48 Wolverine Citizen, April 1882.

49 Ellis, 315-319.

50 Ellis, 328-331. Irish-Catholics can be identified in Genesee Township politics prior to 1856, when the township included land that would become Mt. Morris township.

51 Wolverine Citizen, 8 May 1869.

52 Ellis, 315-319.

53 Wood, II, 485, 321, 790, 92, 469, 491, 619, 482. Bowen, 317, 329. Chapman Brothers, pub., Portrait and Biographical Record of Genesee, Lapeer, and Tuscola Counties, Michigan, (Chicago, 1892).

54 Bowen, 319.

55 Bowen, 329.

56 Chapman, 242.

- 57 Chapman, 1043.
- 58 Chapman, 1044.
- 59 Census, 1880.
- 60 This is the first correspondence which I could locate concerning the activities of Mt. Morris Village.
- 61 The remainder may have included the grandchildren of Irish immigrants since the census records did not trace ethnic origins beyond the parents of those recorded.
- 62 Census, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900.
- 63 Wolverine Citizen, 21 April 1870.
- 64 Wolverine Citizen, 8 October 1868.
- 65 Genesee Democrat, 11 December 1880.
- 66 Genesee Democrat, 22 June 1881.
- 67 Wolverine Citizen, 6 August 1868.
- 68 Mt. Morris Village Council records, April 15, 1869.
- 69 Genesee Democrat, 11 December 1880.
- 70 Genesee Democrat, 30 April 1881.
- 71 The Flint Daily News, 24 November 1886.
- 72 Mt. Morris Centennial publication.
- 73 Wolverine Citizen, 25 November 1869.
- 74 Mt. Morris Village Council minutes, June 2, 1869.
- 75 Wolverine Citizen, 25 November 1869.
- 76 Flint Daily News, 16 November 1886.
- 77 Interview with Sister Thomas Mary.
- 78 A large number of the people registered in the parish baptismal records are from northern Thetford and Vienna townships. They have settlements which surround the missionary church at County Line (Birch Run). A number of missionary baptisms were, undoubtedly, administered on children of Saginaw County.

79 In an interview with St. Mary's secretary Helen Burns on January 24, 1931, she related a story of her parents settlement in Mt. Morris Village in the last part of the 19th century. Her parents were born in Ireland and her father left his job as a farm laborer in western New York to join a business operation with a family member in Mt. Morris.

80 Wood, II, 790.

81 Chapman, 242.

82 Bowen, 317.

83 Personal records of Dr. Richard J. Meister, University of Michigan-Flint concerning the Hughes family.

84 Wood, II, 470.

85 Wood, II, 491.

86 Wolverine Citizen, 18 March 1865.

87 Wolverine Daily Citizen, 10 October 1903. Flint Daily Journal, 6 October 1903. Flint Daily News, 6 October 1903.

88 Richard Neumann, Doug Kassabaum, Wesley Beck, consultants, Genesee County Small Town Historic Character. This May, 1980, study was completed for the Genesee County Board of Commissioners on the historic urban character of small towns in Genesee County.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atlas of Genesee County Michigan. Flint: Homer A. Day, 1899.
- Beers, F. W. Atlas of Genesee County Michigan. New York: 1873
- Billington, Ray Allen. "The Uses of Local History," American Heritage Magazine, (December 1980).
- Biographical History of Genesee County Michigan. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Company, 1907.
- Bureau of the Census, Eighth (1860), Ninth (1870), Tenth (1880), and Twelfth (1900) Census of the United States, (microfilm Copy). Federal Archives.
- Cookingham, E. R. Atlas of Genesee County Michigan. Caro: 1889.
- Elliot, Frank N. When the Railroad Was King. Michigan Historical Commission, 1966.
- Ellis, Franklin. History of Genesee County Michigan. Philadelphia: 1879.
- Graff, George P. The People of Michigan. Michigan Department of Education State Library Services, 1974.
- Mann, Mrs. H. G. Diary of Mrs. H. G. Mann. This book is currently in the possession of Sister Thomas Mary the principal of St. Mary's School in Mt. Morris, Michigan.
- Meek, Forrest B. Michigan's Timber Battleground. Clare Bicentennial Historical Commission, 1976.
- Meister, Richard J. "The Catholic Minority on the Frontier: Anglo-American Catholic's in Indiana 1820 - 1860." This paper was presented at the Spring Meeting of the American Catholic Historical, April 8, 1982 at the University of Notre Dame.
- Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society. Michigan Historical Collection. Volume 21, 1892.
- Mills, Glen V. Genesee County Directory 1897-1898.
- Mount Morris Area Centennial Committee. Mt. Morris Centennial Program 1867-1967.
- Mt. Morris Village Council Records, 2 volumes.

Mt. Morris St. Mary's Baptismal Records, 1870 - 1900.

Osbornes, H. G. Flint City and Genesee County Directory 1881-1882.
Flint: W. J. Beardsley, 1881.

Portrait and Biographical Record of Genesee, Lapeer, and Tuscola Counties,
Michigan. Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1892.

Neumann, Richard, et. al. Genesee County Small Town Historic Character.

Selzer, Wayne A. Original Land Records Genesee County, Michigan. Flint: 1959.

Wood, Edwin O. History of Genesee County Michigan. 2 vols. Indianapolis: 1916.

Local newspapers -- Genesee Democrat, Wolverine Citizen, Wolverine Daily Citizen, and The Flint Daily News -- were examined and used to provide information for this paper. These papers are preserved on microfilm in the Michigan Room of the Central Branch of the Flint Public Library.